

**Chafee Foster Care Independence and
Education and Training Vouchers Programs
Missouri Department of Social Services – Children’s Division
State Plan and Application for FFY 2005-2009**

**Chafee Foster Care Independence (CFCIP) and Education and Training Vouchers
Programs (ETV)**

- **States must include in the CFSP a description of the Chafee Foster Care Independence and the Education and Training Vouchers Programs services to be provided in the upcoming fiscal year (FY 2005).**
- **In order to fulfill the intent of the Act, which is in keeping with positive youth development, States are strongly encouraged to include youth in the development of the State plan.**
- **States must identify the State agency or agencies that will administer, supervise or oversee the programs and provide a statement that indicates that the State agency will cooperate in national evaluation of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of CFCIP.**

State Allocation	20 % Matching Funds	Total Program Cost
Chafee: \$ 3,303,069	\$ 825,767	\$ 4,128,836
ETV: \$ 1,077,913	\$ 269,478	\$ 1,347,391

The Missouri Department of Social Services, Children’s Division is responsible for administering and overseeing the programs to be carried out under the plan.

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The State of Missouri will cooperate in national evaluations pertaining to the effectiveness of the independent living programs implemented to achieve its purposes.

The Chafee section of the CFSP must address the following:

1. **Education and Training Vouchers program. States should note that purpose 6 of section 477(a) is to make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary training and education to youths who have aged out of foster care. ACYF-CB-PI-03-06, issued July 8, 2003, provides the specific guidance to develop this portion of the plan.**

Describe how the State will establish, expand or strengthen its post secondary educational assistance program to achieve the purpose of the ETV program (section 477(a)(6) of the Act) and to accomplish the purposes of the Act. States must describe the methods they use to operate the program efficiently and assure that they will comply with the conditions specified in subsection 477(i). (See Attachment E.) The components that apply to CFCIP also apply to ETV and must be included in the narrative section of the CFSP either alone or in combination with the CFCIP portion of the plan.

Missouri continues to expand the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program to serve eligible youth. Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program and currently uses ETV funding received on October 1, 2003 to assist youth with costs of attendance for post-secondary educational and training programs. Missouri plans to expand its marketing and outreach initiatives to secondary, post-secondary programs, and other agencies or service providers who work with the foster or former foster care population. Missouri's Chafee website was expanded to add ETV information and the application. Enhancements continue to be made as the program is developing.

Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. Current requirements for eligible youth to receive assistance are:

- Youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a "C" average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in a training program;
- Youth must be accepted to an accredited college/university, vocational school or certified training program;
- Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized, and;
- There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program.

The major portion of the ETV funding will be used to continue and expand the current program by increasing the number of youth served. With the ETV program, youth will have opportunities to live in a structured community with affordable housing and meals, access on-campus resources, including recreation, health services, and age appropriate activities.

An application process is in place which requires youth to providing information on financial need. The application process and a database will track services and expenditures to ensure that vouchers do not exceed the total cost of attendance or \$5,000 per year.

Eligible youth will be able to access the ETV program through his/her Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialist. Eligible youth are those who currently qualify for Chafee services and are in the process of transitioning out of foster care or former foster care youth between the ages of 17.5 – 21. Foster and former foster care youth

participating in ETV on their 21st birthday shall remain eligible until their 23rd birthday, provided they are making satisfactory progress. Post-secondary ETVs will also be offered to youth who were adopted or achieved legal guardianship after age 16.

Current and former foster care youth are eligible to receive the federally funded Pell Grants. CD requires all youth applying for ETVs to submit a copy of their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and an award letter from their chosen school providing all other financial aid awarded. Youth may choose to attend public, private or non-profit four-year universities or colleges, two-year community colleges, vocational/technical schools or specialized one-year training programs. Educational or training programs must be accredited/pre-accredited or certified. Youth must be willing to participate in federal Work Study program or work part-time.

ILP staff will continue to improve the design and implementation of an outreach effort for the ETV program. ILP staff will regularly identify and inform agency staff, eligible youth, placement providers, secondary, post-secondary education and training programs, and other youth serving agencies about the ETV program. Outreach efforts will include staff and informational meetings, brochures, flyers and other written materials distributed and accessible on a statewide bases in all CD offices and public access locations.

Missouri will contact other states and research possibilities of putting in place a mechanism to track youth who have exited foster care. This will prove to be a challenge to identify and locate youth who have left foster care, especially those who left six months ago or more. Efforts will also be made to partner with community agencies that have expertise and access to our former foster youth.

Missouri will modify its policies and make system edits to serve adopted youth and youth eligible for assistance to age 23 and educate staff about the ETV program. Additional staff or contractors will be needed to assist in the continued program design, implementation and improvement.

This additional service will balance Missouri's efforts to have foster youth lead successful and productive lives.

2. States should discuss how they will design, conduct and/or strengthen their programs to achieve the purposes of section 477(b)(2)(A) of the Act to:

a) Help youth transition to self-sufficiency;

The Children's Division (CD) has used the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) funds to staff one state level coordinator. The state level coordinator position is responsible for program development and coordination, implementation, resource development, training, administrative and budgetary oversight, technical assistance, and policy development.

CD is also using CFCIP funds to continue staffing the 12 ILP Specialists positions located throughout the state. The Specialists work directly and collaboratively with the case managers, foster parents, contracted providers, and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, contractor compliance, on-going consultation and training to agency staff, foster parents, and other providers. They provide direct services to youth in skill assessments and training on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. The Specialists also provide services through youth camps, retreats, and conferences. Referrals for CFCIP services are commonly made to the ILP Specialist from youth's case manager or foster care providers, other agencies or by self-referral.

The purpose of Missouri's Independent Living Program (ILP) is to assist foster and former foster youth achieve positive outcomes in their transition to self-sufficiency. Since 1997, Missouri has provided independent living services to youth ages 13-21. The state funding for the Choices Program for youth ages 13-15 was eliminated by the Missouri Legislature during FY 2004. However, the Children's Division (CD) acknowledges the importance and the federal requirements to serve youth younger than age 16. This budget deficit provided CD with an opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. A workgroup consisting of CD staff and ILP contractors worked diligently to design a practical application program, which will serve youth along a continuum of services from pre-independent living, for the younger than age 16, to the young adults who have exited foster care and may need Aftercare services.

Policy will be developed to introduce and clarify the new Pre-ILP for youth 14 to 15. Policy has been developed requiring all youth ages 14 and older to complete the Ansell/Casey Life Skills Assessment prior to being referred to ILP or Pre-ILP.

Children entering into custody of the Children's Division have differing experiences, levels of resiliency, and unique needs. Missouri's ILP is designed to allow maximum flexibility in eligibility for services; regional allocations to support program costs; and access to additional funding on behalf of eligible youth and young adults to address individual needs.

Youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 are provided the opportunity to participate in life skills training classes when they become age appropriate. Youth are provided information about available Chafee services by the ILP Specialists, Case Managers or life skills facilitators. Services are to be used to assist youth in complementing their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure they recognize and accept personal responsibility in preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. All youth ages 16 and over are required to have an independent living case plan regardless of their permanency goal. They shall be involved in their case planning to address the development of skills and resources needed to facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency.

Chafee funds will also be utilized to continue supporting Missouri's Aftercare program for youth who have exited state custody at 17.5 and older, but have not yet reached age 21. Additionally funds will be used to for administration and facilitation of the foster youth advisory boards.

Life skill training is available in all regions of the state. A state core curriculum is used and modules are added to meet needs of youth in different geographical areas. Skills training vary in length and generally last six to nine months, meeting once per week for two hours in a classroom setting. Field trips, seminars, workshops, weekend retreats, camps, and community service projects are also part of the program. Youth receive a small stipend and other incentives for attending each training session and completing homework. It is expected the core curriculum will be redesigned in the next two years to provide youth with both tangible and intangible skills through a "hands-on" approach.

Policy and procedural updates and a Children's Division memorandum is currently being introduced to all staff requiring them to begin exit planning for all youth ages 17 and older and for those who will be leaving foster care. The purpose of conduct an exit planning interview is to identify anticipated and arrange for service needs for older youth who will soon be exiting foster care. An exit interview must take place:

- At least 6 months prior to the youth leaving custody;
- For all youth at ages 17 or older; and
- Annually for all youth over the age of 18 who remain in care and custody of the Division.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) is in partnership with Jackson County Children's Division. JCYOI is a national endeavor to assist youth in foster care make successful transitions to self-sufficiency and independence. JCYOI's goal is to bring together people and resources needed to assist youth make the necessary contacts they need for employment, education, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community connections. JCYOI began partnering with Missouri in December 2001 in the Kansas City and St. Louis area. CD will continue to work with JCYOI to assist them in educating the communities to support foster youth and to understand the importance of involving youth in the decision making process that affects their lives. JCYOI's purpose is to accomplish three key strategies: youth leadership boards, community partnership boards, and Opportunity Passports. The Opportunity Passport is designed to organize resources and create opportunities for foster and Aftercare youth. It assists youth in accumulating assets and direct experience with money management. Youth who apply and are selected to receive a Passport will receive an individual development account (a matched savings account), a personal debit account, and a variety of available community services at reduced rates or obtain preferential treatment.

b) Help youth receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment;

All youth should have a minimum of a GED as an overall goal. Many efforts were made to help youth gain job training and work experience. Each year 20-30 youth are selected statewide to participate in the training on Microsoft Office Application Software. CD staff including case managers and ILP Specialists referred youth to Job Corps, Americorps, and all branches of the military. Youth received job training, job mentoring and placement, and social support. Various community members representing their professions were used as guest speakers and to assist youth with mock interviewing. Many graduates of life skills training return to the program to serve as paid graduate assistants, interns, class co-facilitators, office assistant and serve as tutors, mentors, and chaperones in activities with younger foster children.

Through Missouri's Workforce Development Youth Programs, services are provided to improve the long-term job opportunities for youth. The programs encourage school completion or enrollment in high school equivalency programs. These programs also assist eligible youth, ages 14-21, to obtain employment through work experience and help them to improve academic skills to successfully move from school to work. Goal setting is a primary focus in youth programs. Services include:

- Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion;
- Alternative secondary school offerings;
- Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;
- Occupational skills training;
- Leadership development opportunities;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Follow-up services; and
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

Missouri's Workforce Development also offers five Job Corps centers that Missouri youth can attend. Three are located in Missouri. Job Corps is a residential education and employment training program. It provides vocational and academic skills to young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. The program provides youth accepted into the program with room, board, and spending money while they learn. Job Corps is committed to providing a safe environment for its students to ensure they acquire the skills and preparation they need to succeed in the workplace.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides funding to ten community partnerships to implement structured work site and community-based mentoring. When youth are referred they must complete a 20-30 hours (based on the youth's learning capacity) job readiness training. The curriculum focuses on "soft skills" training, resume preparation and mock interviewing. Once the youth passes the job readiness training, they can begin their job search and then a job mentor is assigned.

c) Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions;

Early and on-going support for education is extremely important in preparing youth for self-sufficiency. Education is being approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner in the early years. Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. The State of Missouri is committed to ensuring youth have the opportunity and support to access post-secondary education or training.

Educational services and supports are also available to any foster youth to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Services are provided based on the youth's educational needs. Educational supports can include an education advocate, tutoring, individualized plans, and other needs necessary for the youth to be educationally successful.

With the passage of the Stable and Safe Families Act, Missouri now offers Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program. Missouri will use ETV funding to expand and strengthen its post secondary educational assistance to eligible youth.

The purpose of the ETV program is to provide resources to eligible young adults to apply toward the cost of attendance at post-secondary vocational/educational institutions. Eligible ETV program participants are youth who are eligible for services under Missouri's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and youth who were adopted or achieve legal guardianship after the youth 16th birthday. Young adults who are receiving financial assistance through ETV on their 21st birthday may continue to receive ETV services up until their 23rd birthday, provided they are enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program and is making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Youth applicants must be graduating high school seniors, have their high school diploma, be completing their G.E.D. or have a G.E.D. certificate. Youth must be preparing for enrollment in post-secondary education, have been accepted for enrollment or are presently continuing their education at an institution of higher learning including a vocation/technical school. Youth must be making satisfactory progress (minimum GPA of 2.0 or otherwise agreed upon) and provide a copy of a transcript verifying their GPA in order to receive continuing assistance. If youth are attending a program which does not use grades to

document progress, the youth must provide a letter from the program verifying the youth is making satisfactory progress.

Funds provided under the ETV program may be used for expenses related to the cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.

Missouri offers different types of post-secondary institutions, which provides education and/or training beyond the high school level. There are 33 regionally accredited institution of higher education in Missouri which includes two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities and a state college. There are at least 52 accredited independent nonprofit two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, technical and professional institutions, theological schools, and seminaries. There is also a long list of proprietary institutions that may be accredited and unaccredited but are certified to operate by Missouri Department of Higher Education that generally offers education and training designed to prepare graduates for direct entry into specific occupations or profession.

d) Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interaction with dedicated adults;

The ability of young people transitioning out of or who have exited foster care to develop a support network, and the influence of informal role models to serve as mentors in a support network is critical. Missouri currently offers personal and emotional support to young people through job placement, formal and informal mentors. Committed and caring adults are essential in guiding young people and helping them maneuver in their community.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides resource coordination for youth and volunteer mentors recruited from the community. These mentors provide positive role modeling, friendship and guidance around employment and parenting issues to youth who are entering the workplace or have become parents.

Community service or volunteering is a critical component in our life skills training program. We find that youth who volunteer in community service programs have an opportunity to meet and develop relationships with adults and other youth who are involved in the same projects as well as develop work skills.

e) Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age;

Missouri continues to provide services and support for youth between 18 and 21 years of age. While in foster care, these older youth are provided with the same services as the younger youth. In addition, older foster youth also receive education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment, prepare for and enter post-secondary education and training.

Chafee services are available for foster youth ages 14-21. Youth who exit foster care on their 17.5 birthday and have not yet reached age 21 are eligible to receive Chafee Aftercare services. Youth may access Chafee services as needed while in the Division's care and custody or as a former foster youth.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a **safety net** to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited DFS custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the need of the former foster youth. Chafee funds may be expended for a variety of reasons and should be used as a support for the young adult, not an on-going supplemental funding source. Aftercare services may include emergency/crisis intervention services, housing/room and board, educational/job training/employment assistance, and other support services.

Room and board services are only available to youth who exited custody at age 18 or after, but they have not yet reached age 21. Room and board may include security and utility deposits, rent, utilities, food, start-up kits, basic necessities, and basic furniture. Support services provided include life skills training, transportation, child care, clothing, and other expenses as needed. Youth may receive up to a lifetime maximum of \$3,500.00 for any one or a combination of all these categorical services during their eligibility period, excluding post-secondary educational and training assistance.

f) Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education, to youth who have aged out of foster care.

During FY 2004, over 1,200 notification letters were sent to all former foster youth who exited custody at age 17.5, all youth who were adopted or achieved legal guardianship after age 16. Additionally, letters were sent to residential treatment providers, Juvenile/Family Court judges, commissioners, and juvenile officers.

A policy memorandum was sent to all Children's Division staff introducing ETV information. Informational meetings and technical assistance have been and continues to be provided to staff, placement providers, community youth serving agencies, and age eligible youth. An application process is required for youth to access services. Eligible youth can access the ETV application through their ILP Specialist or on the Internet at Missouri's state Chafee website at www.dss.mo.gov/cd.chafee.

Eligible youth are those who currently qualify for Chafee services and are in foster care or former foster youth between 17.5 -21. Foster and former foster youth participating in the ETV program on their 21st birthday shall remain eligible until their 23rd birthday, provided they are making satisfactory progress.

Services to Youth Ages 18-20: Section 477(a)(5) permits State to provide services to youth ages 18 through 20 years who have left foster care but have not

reached their twenty-first birthday. States are required to provide services (including room and board) to, and expend funds on behalf of, youth who left foster care because they attained 18 years of age, but have not yet attained 21 years of age (Section 477(b)(3)). In the State plan, States should describe the approaches being used to address these provisions.

Youth ages 18-21 with post-secondary educational and training plans are encouraged to remain in the state's custody until they complete their educational program or reach age 21. However, if they choose to leave custody they are to be provided with information on available services available through Chafee.

CD recognizes and respects the need young adults may have to venture out into the world to experience it. However, young adults ages 18 – 21 who exit foster care face genuine and imminent needs on their road to self-sufficiency. Even with the best of planning, there are no guarantees that leaving foster care will be smooth and easy for youth. This is a time when they experience many things and may face many challenges. They often have little or no support in their endeavors. For whatever reasons the youth or the court may have to exit custody, we cannot and do not expect these foster youth at age 18 to be able to stand on their own two feet and leave the only support they may have known.

Former foster youth who exited at age 18 or after and have not yet reached age 21 will be eligible to continue receiving many of the same services they received while still in foster care. Basic needs of food and shelter are a priority. Other services may include, but are not limited to crisis intervention or emergency funds, support/resource referrals, educational assistance, job training, stable employment, money management and budgeting skills.

Eligible former foster youth may return to the Division at anytime to request assistance. They are required to complete the Chafee Aftercare Support application which serves as an assessment on service needs, resources, willingness to accept personal responsibility and other information needed by IL staff to assist the youth. Youth may choose to request assistance only once or return intermittently to seek assistance as needed.

Room and Board: The State must develop a reasonable definition of “room and board” and provide the definition in the CDSP. The CFSP must include a description of the approach(es) being used to make room and board available to youth ages 18 through 20. States are required to certify (by signing the Certification form in Attachment E) in their State plan that no more than 30 percent of their allotment of Federal funds will be expended for room and board for youth who left foster care because they attained 18 years of age, but have not attained 21 years of age.

One of the biggest steps youth will make in the transition from foster care to living independently is assuming the responsibility for their own housing. The State of

Missouri defines “room and board” as security and utilities deposits for eligible youth who left foster care at age 18 and older, but have not yet reached age 21. It also includes food, rent, start-up kits, basic furniture and necessities.

For youth ages 18-21 remaining in the state’s care and custody, they may be eligible to access room and board services only to supplement additional needs not covered under services, such as the monthly maintenance stipend, provided using state funds. Youth in the process of transitioning out of foster care and placed in an Independent Living Arrangements may access Chafee room and board funds to purchase basic furniture, start-up kits, and other necessities.

Missouri certifies that; 1) the State will provide assistance and services to youth who have left foster care because they have attained 18 years of age and not attained age 21; 2) not more than 30 percent of the state’s allotment will be expended to the eligible population for room and board. Missouri does not anticipate expending more than 15 percent of the state’s allotment due to using state funds to provide room and board needs to youth 18-21 who remain in the state’s care and custody; 3) and none of the amounts paid from the allotment will be expended for room and board for any child who has not attained 18 years of age.

- 3. Describe how youth of various ages and at various stages of achieving independence are to be served, particularly with regard to services for (1) youth under 16, (2) youth 16-18 and (3) youth 18 through 20. The description should include the identification of State statutory and/or administrative barriers, if any, which, in order to facilitate the State serving a broader range of eligible youth, need to be eliminated or amended. States should also discuss how they are developing services for those individuals “likely to remain in foster care until age 18.” Some identifiers of individuals “likely to remain in foster care until 18” include, but are not limited to, age, ethnicity, presenting problems, case histories, and individual case goals and objectives.**

In 1997, CD began providing independent living services for youth 13-15 through the Choices Program using state only funds. During the FY 2004 legislative session, the Missouri General Assembly eliminated this funding to this program. This provided CD with the opportunity to design a hands-on practical applications program for this younger population. This Pre-ILP program will be available to youth ages 14-15 during the summer of 2004. This curriculum-based, classroom and hands-on instruction, lasts between 8 -12 weeks. Five domains will be covered in the instruction; *Daily Living Skills, Money Management, Self care Skills, Social Development, and Study and Work Skills*. All youth ages 14 – 15, not previously served under the Choices program will be given the opportunity to participate in the skills training program. Other services available include attending seminars, workshops, summer camp and support groups to maintain and strengthen the skills they have acquired.

Foster care youth ages 16 – 21 will be served using a combination of state and federal funds. Current policy requires that youth ages 16 and older are referred to ILP for life

skills training. Youth choosing to participate will receive a combination of classroom and hands-on practice for six to nine months. Youth shall be provided information regarding available services by their Case Manager. Services shall be provided to assist youth in complementing their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility in preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Youth shall also be involved in their permanency planning and understanding personal responsibility in attaining their goals.

CD will respond proactively in permanency planning for any youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18. Services may include, but are not limited to: basic maintenance, medical services, pursuing and completing a high school education, career exploration and training, vocational training, job placement and retention, life skills training, budgeting and financial management skills, substance prevention, support services and preventive health activities.

Former foster youth who were in foster care at least six months and left care at age 17.5 or after, but have not reached age 21 may receive much of the same services they received while in care. Medical services, except for information and referral, however, are not available for this population to access. There is a lifetime maximum of up to \$3,500 available for any Chafee eligible youth to access services. Services may be accessed during or after foster care.

Services are available statewide. Services needed by youth remaining in the care and custody of Missouri, but residing in another state will continued to be paid by Missouri's allotment. Youth no longer in Missouri's care and custody and residing in another state can access services through the state they currently reside in or may request services from Missouri. Chafee eligible youth from another state residing in Missouri may access services available in Missouri. Because these youth have never been in Missouri's foster care system and database, the capability to capture information is limited to manually tracking and payment for services cannot be made through the integrated payment system. CD will work with the Information Services and Technology Division to improve and expand our current Alternative Care Tracking System to capture this automated information.

- 4. Discuss how the State involves the public and private sectors in helping adolescents in foster care achieve self-sufficient independence. Beginning in FY 2000, State have had an opportunity to conduct meetings and plan activities with various partners and stakeholders to design and develop a CFCIP State Plan.**
- 5. States should describe in detail how public and private organizations representing a wide range of stakeholders and consumers, in particular Indian Tribes, were consulted, and are involved in, the development of this part of the CFSP.**

Since 2000, meetings have been held with stakeholders annually to consult with various public and private youth serving agencies to plan activities to design and develop each

year's state Chafee plan. Stakeholders provide feedback on current services and recommendations for continued improvement. Stakeholders invited to attend meetings include ILP staff and contractors, current and former foster youth, foster parents and other care providers, foster care workers and administrative agency staff, Elementary and Secondary Education, medical professionals, juvenile court staff, employment/ training program professionals, abstinence educators, emergency/homeless shelter providers, Indian Centers, and mental health professionals. Each year, we review what Missouri's program is, revisit eligibility requirements, identify service gaps, and brainstorm solutions.

Since 2000, at least one meeting annually was specifically convened with a group of stakeholders or the state IL Coordinator participated in meetings addressing youth specific needs. In reviewing the participation and commitment of stakeholders from past meetings for this program, a decision was made to convene more localized meetings. In March 2004, six regional meetings were held to offer more opportunities for input and consultation. Additionally more partners were invited including Department of Higher Education, housing providers, legislators, media, community business leaders, and local politicians. Approximately 400 people were invited and 160 attended. Specific attempts were made to ensure attendance by at least one youth at each meeting.

The State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) is kept abreast of changes in policy and provides valuable input through the state IL Coordinator, who serves as their liaison to the Children's Division. Any proposed new or revised changes to Chafee policy do not become effective until SYAB or other interested youth have the opportunity to review and comment.

- 6. States should discuss their efforts: (1) to coordinate with “other Federal and State programs for youth (especially transitional living programs funded under Part B of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, abstinence programs, local housing program, programs for disable youth (especially sheltered workshops), and school-to-work program...”, and; (2) to consult with and coordinate with “each Indian tribe in the State” and ensure “that benefits and services under the program will be available to Indian children in the State on the same basis as to other children in the State” (certification F and G, section 477(b)(3)). Also, States are encouraged to coordinate services with other relevant programs, including, but not limited to, the Court Improvement Program, Community Action Agencies, and Medicaid.**

Missouri continues to utilize services from the National Resource Centers to meet training needs and access technical assistance. In 2003 National Resource Center for Youth Services/Development (NRCYD) assisted Missouri in facilitating a stakeholder meeting to begin developing a vision and strategic plan for the next five year Chafee plan. In 2004 NRCYD assisted Missouri with facilitating three of the six community stakeholder meetings.

One of the first bills signed into law this legislative session by Missouri's Governor created a collaborative approach to working with children, youth and families. While the intent of this bill was to prevent families from having to relinquish custody of their children to access mental health services, it also provides an opportunity for several agencies to come together to address issues and service needs of children and families. This Children's Mental Health Reform Act of 2004 requires the Department of Mental Health to develop partnerships with all departments represented on the Children's Services Commission. A Comprehensive System Management Team will comprise of CD, Division of Youth Services, Division of Medical Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Divisions of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability and Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Department of Public Safety, Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA), and the juvenile justice system.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) recently received a challenge grant through the Department of Public Safety, the Missouri Juvenile Justice Advisory Group and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide training on meeting the mental health need of youth. The MO Alliance for Youth: A partnership between DMH and the Juvenile Justice for Youth Steering Committee (consisting of a broad range of various state agencies, juvenile court and a parent representative) is working on the development of the content and format of a training curriculum that can best meet the needs of the professionals working with youth with mental health needs.

In September 1999, Missouri's Supreme Court established the Permanency Planning Project of the Family Court Committee to develop a statewide, comprehensive approach for assuring that children and youth placed by the court in out-of-home care achieve timely permanency. In response to the Project's recommendations, the Family Court Committee developed a Missouri specific "Best Practices" resource guide for use by courts in abuse and neglect cases. The resource guide provides judges with a comprehensive and "user friendly" reference tool for use during the court process including orders for protective custody, protective custody hearings, adjudication, dispositional and permanency hearings. In addition, informational or "bench" cards were developed on the Indian Child Welfare Act, Interstate Compact on Child Placement, and the Multi-ethnic Placement Act. The Family Court Committee, OSCA and CD continue to maintain a working relationship to develop three more additional cards, one of which is for Chafee and ETV. A draft copy of Chafee and ETV information has been submitted to the Chair of the Family Court Committee. It is anticipated the new bench cards will become part of the resource guide by the end of the 2004 calendar year.

The IL Coordinator also sits on the Council for Adolescent and School Health. This council consists of various state and county agencies. Its goal is to support adolescent and school health and to facilitate collaboration to promote a coordinated, family, community, and school approach to achieve healthy adolescent development.

Missouri does not have federally recognized Indian tribes in the state. However, there are two, the Heart of America Indian and the Southwest Missouri Indian Centers that are

very active in the state. Several representatives were invited from the Indian Centers to participate in the grant planning process in March. Representatives for the Southwest Missouri Indian Center participated in the Southwest Region Chafee stakeholders meeting on March 18, 2004. All benefits and services under the programs are made available to Indian youth in the state on the same basis as to other youth in the state.

- 7. The CFSP should describe how the State has utilized, or is coordinating efforts to utilize, the option to expand Medicaid to provide services to youth ages 18 to 20 years old who have aged out of foster care. Subtitle C, section 121 of P.L. 106-169 permits States to expand Medicaid eligibility for youth transitioning from foster care. A State may provide Medicaid to all young people under the age of 21 who were in foster care under the responsibility of the State on their eighteenth birthday, or to “reasonable categories” of this group. If the State does not choose to provide Medicaid to all young people under the age of 21 who were in foster care under the State’s responsibility on their eighteenth birthday, the State plan should describe what “reasonable categories” of children it has chosen to provide Medicaid services to, if any.**

Missouri will not be taking the Medicaid Option to provide medical services to former foster youth who left care at age 18 or older and have not yet reached age 21. Missouri Medicaid has undergone severe reductions and it is expected that introducing an amendment at this time would not garner much support. The final budget eliminates Medicaid coverage for parents between 77 percent and 75 percent of the federal poverty level. By estimates, this action will exclude approximately 300 to 350 persons who are now receiving coverage.

- 8. Discuss the objective criteria the State uses for determining eligibility for benefits and services under the programs, including the process for developing the criteria.**

In the State FY 2001-2004 plan, eligibility for Chafee services included any youth who was age 13 and likely to remain in foster care until age 18. Chafee Aftercare services was available to former foster youth who exited the state’s care and custody at age 18 or after and had not yet reached age 21. Eligibility for Chafee funded services for FY 2005-2009 include young adults, ages 14 to 21 who are currently in the custody of the Children’s Division, regardless of their permanency goal or placement type. Eligibility will be based on the individualized needs of youth. Aftercare services are provided to former foster youth if they were in CD’s custody at age 17, but exited at 17.5 years or later, but have not yet reached age 21.

This change in eligibility was based on budget cuts to a state funded program for youth ages 13-15. Eligibility requirements for Aftercare services was amended at the recommendations from external stakeholders and ILP staff in FY2004 to begin serving Aftercare youth who exit at age 17.5 instead of age 18. Lowering this age requirement will assist those youth whose court’s jurisdiction was terminated prematurely to receive the necessary services to better assist in their transition to self-sufficiency.

Eligibility for the State's Education and Training Voucher program is the same as for the State's Chafee funded services, but extends to serve youth until their 23rd birthday if they are enrolled in an education or training program on their 21st birthday and is maintain satisfactory progress. This service is also expanded to serve youth who were adopted or achieved legal guardianship on or after their 16th birthday.

9. Discuss how the State ensures fair and equitable treatment of benefit recipients.

Policy and procedure set forth in the CD child welfare manual requires the provision of Chafee and Education and Training Voucher services be made available to all eligible youth in the care and custody of CD. Guidelines allow for individual service provision for the range of allowable IL services based on need and the development of the youth's independent living plan. Services are personalized to meet the individualized needs of the youth. Services are provided regardless of race, gender or ethnic origin.

10. Describe how the comments received from the public (both written and oral), influenced the contents of the Plan.

Six Chafee Stakeholder meetings were held in March to review CFCIP and ETV, acquaint valued and new stakeholders to the strategic plan as developed in the 2003 stakeholder meeting, and to gain ideas, input and support of the programs and the development of the five year plan. A planning process developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs included creating a vision, analyzing the driving forces for and against achieving the vision, the development of strategic directions and an implementation plan. The groups built on all four-phases but emphasized the last two phases of the process. Each group identified three strategic directions they were willing to refine and develop further. Strategic direction workgroups were organized and asked to choose one project or activity as the 90 day intent they as a group is willing to work on for continued plan development and program improvement.

The following are the three strategic directions and the 90 day intent each of the regions chose to implement:

St. Louis Region:

Strategic Directions

- Move towards permanence and stability
- Move towards establishing health care and education policy
- Working toward improved programming

90 Day Intent

- Hold quarterly interagency meetings to share information, training, and improve communication
- Moving toward establishing health care and educational policy by information gathering and the organization of policy issues

- An outreach project for locating former foster care youth who are eligible for Chafee services.

Southwest Region:

Strategic Directions

- Improve public and community involvement
- Engaging more young people
- Improving staff ability to implement programs to increase success rate

90 Day Intent

- Educate the community about Chafee and ETV by speaking at community based location to improve opinion and community involvement
- Empower youth by providing youth ages 14 and older with information and supportive services
- Research best practice to Improve staff ability to increase success.

Northeast Region

Strategic Directions

- Strengthening youth participation and promoting responsibility
- Improve services and results (Positive outcomes for youth)
- Increase utilization of Chafee services

90 Day Intent

- Conduct quarterly area youth advisory board meetings to strengthen youth participation and promote responsibility
- Provide Chafee information to youth to increase youth awareness
- Educating community agencies about Chafee by handing out Chafee pamphlets at community meetings

Northwest Region

Strategic Directions

- Increasing community involvement and more resources
- Increasing opportunities with a greater number of youth
- Developing measurements for continuous improvement

90 Day Intent

- Identifying existing networks to educate and promote the program
- Create a youth exit packet to ensure exiting youth has adequate resources
- Increasing opportunities with a greater number of youth by developing a list of alternative health care options available.

Southeast Region

Strategic Directions

- Increasing knowledge to youth, foster parents, court, Children's Division staff, schools, etc. to assist youth reach self-sufficiency
- Increase resource awareness of services available and sharing of the resources
- Strengthening support systems

90 Day Intent

- Send information to judges and juvenile offices to educate on ILP resources
- Developing a mailing list of resources to provide support to ILP staff
- Establish a protocol and expectations to implement a pre-hearing (court) pilot.

Kansas City Region

Strategic Directions

- Increasing self-sufficiency for youth
- Improving agency responsiveness to youth's needs
- Maximizing Chafee awareness, utilization, and sustainability

90 Day Intent

- Identify at-risk youth who will not graduate from high school because of lack of credit hours
- Improve agency responsiveness to youth's needs by researching liability insurance needs for off-site computer lab usage
- Develop an e-mail distribution list for on-going Chafee information and updates to maximize Chafee awareness, utilization, and sustainability.

Each of these stakeholders will be provide with a draft copy of the plan via e-mail and given opportunity to comment.

Missouri's State Chafee plan was posted on the Department of Social Services website for thirty days beginning May 14, 2004 and ending on June 13, 2004 for public comment. No comments were received throughout this posting period.

Draft copies of the FY 2005-2009 State Plan was forwarded to all grant-planning participants. However, input was provided throughout the stakeholder grant planning process. Overall, respondents were excited about the program. They felt the flexibility of the program and its services are wonderful resources for foster and former foster youth. Community partners were excited about the program, its possibilities, and the building or strengthening collaboration efforts.

Primary weaknesses identified during the stakeholder meetings include: 1. Inadequate health care coverage and the state's decision to continue opting out of the Medicaid Option. 2. There has been an expansion of CFCIP services, but there continues to be the same number of staff

available to provide services. There is not enough ILP staff to provide services. There has not been an increase in staff since the beginning of the former Independent Living Initiative in 1987. 3. Exit planning was not consistently being completed with youth. 4. Sibling visitation difficult or not occurring. 5. Bureaucratic red tape presents barriers in contracting staff and making payments to vendors on a timely basis to ensure service continuity.